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United States  
Department of  
Agriculture

Food and  
Consumer  
Service

3101 Park  
Center Drive

Alexandria, VA  
22302-1500

## **The Garden Project**

Enclosed for your information is a copy of The Garden Project. This report provides a guidebook to how the Garden Project works and describes the project in terms of the number of people – including food stamp participants – served, their characteristics, and outcomes following participation.

The Garden Project is a private/public partnership of the San Francisco County Sheriff's Office and the San Francisco community to help disadvantaged persons become productive, self-sufficient citizens. With its emphasis on providing job training and employment for people in need, the potential exists to link innovations like The Garden Project to the Food Stamp Program's Employment and Training (E&T) Program. The E&T Program seeks to assist food stamp recipients achieve greater self-sufficiency by gaining the skills, training, or experience that will increase their ability to obtain regular employment

For additional information, contact the Office of Analysis and Evaluation on (703) 305-2133.



THE  
**GARDEN**  
Project

A public-private sector partnership of the San Francisco County Sheriff's Office and the San Francisco Community

THE  
**GARDEN**  
Project

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

*"We're seeing it work. Most people go onto food stamps and other forms of public assistance when they leave jail. This project gives them an opportunity to become self-sufficient; an opportunity most are eager to take. It also teaches people to take care of themselves and their families—to literally grow—in other ways, too. Healthier ways."*

—Sharon Levinson, Food and Consumer Service, USDA

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We extend special thanks to the staff and supporters of The Garden Project of San Francisco, specifically: Michael Hennessey, San Francisco County Sheriff, whose leadership and belief in the importance of prevention programs has guided and supported the program from its inception; Catherine Sneed, county inmate counselor and The Garden Project Director, whose vision and commitment founded, inspired and sustain the project, and dedicated Garden Project staff: David Sneed; Kit Henshaw; Harrison Schailey; Elliott Donnelley and Jerous Sneed, directors of the Tree Corps; Harold Galicer; Michelle Lynn; Peter McBride; Bobby Soto; and Beverly Sneed Echols. We would also like to recognize and thank Assistant Sheriff Michael Marcum, Undersheriff Walter Thomas, Deputy Richard Roja, Eileen Hurst and all the staff in the San Francisco Sheriff's Department. The Department of Public Works has also provided invaluable assistance, including John Roubamis, Mel Baker, Dan McKenna and Carrie Durkee. Sibella Krause, one of the original organizers of the San Francisco Farmer's Market, has been a great and most helpful friend. Special commendation is due to the business and civic leaders who have supported The Garden Project in myriad creative ways, including: Alice Waters, Bill Sommerville, Sharon Levinson, Meredith Beam, Dan Beam, Reed Hearon, and Elloit Hoffman. We are also grateful to project participants Camille, George, Tim, Heidi and Robert who generously shared their thoughts and experiences. Finally, we would like to dedicate this manual to the memory of Gerald Pierre, a valued and beloved member of the Tree Corps.

## FOREWORD

*The Garden Project of San Francisco is one of the most innovative and successful community-based crime prevention programs in the country. But its value goes far beyond crime prevention, providing job training, employment, environmental appreciation and beautification—often for the first time—for people and places in need.*

*The Project was established to assist former offenders upon their return to the community. It gives the sense of purpose and the income necessary to provide a viable and positive alternative to criminal activity. This helps the community become a safer place, while significantly improving low-income and other neglected areas. The Garden Project transforms abandoned lots into bountiful gardens, and beautifies schoolyards and thoroughfares through its sister projects: the Alliance for Green Schools and the Tree Corps.*

*With its emphasis on providing job training and employment for people in need, the potential exists to link innovations like The Garden Project to the Food Stamp Program's employment and training mission. The Food Stamp Act of 1977 authorizes administrative funding for States to run employment and training programs designed to move low-income persons off of the Food Stamp Program and into the workplace. By serving food stamp participants and giving them new job skills and work experience, The Garden Project offers a model for other States and communities to consider as they design their own employment and training programs.*

*The purpose of this manual is to share information on how the San Francisco Garden Project works. We also hope it will inspire municipalities across America to establish the public-private partnerships necessary to create similar projects in their communities.*

*This is a story about growth. The miracle of it, in all its forms. The hope it bears...the flowering of plants, herbs. The development of individuals. The blossoming of neighborhoods that had been stunted, even blighted. The Garden Project of San Francisco is the first of its kind in the country. It has transformed lives, mindsets and environments in ways that deeply inspire. To examine it as a model, we must first appreciate certain principles.*

### Gardening Is an Art.

The Garden Project was created literally from the ground up, with no resources beyond determination and dirt. Hands-on experience adjusted and refined the program



over the years—literally (and figuratively) weeding out pests and problems, rotating and introducing new crops. Flexibility, innovation and creativity are the program's critical root system, according to its founders and visionaries. After all, any observant gardener knows that each plant responds differently to the variables of soil, sun, water, temperature and nourishment. And that there is much that is undefinable, inexplicable and even magical about the process.

At the same time, gardening is a science. There are certain truths—time-honored techniques, natural cycles—that must be respected. Research, formulas and objective information also have their place in the successful garden, and in the successful social program.

This manual, then, is an attempt to share both the objective and subjective sides of the growing experience. Much of what the San Francisco Garden Project has done may apply to your community; some aspects may not. But if this story and these suggestions seed similar projects across the United States, there will be a rich harvest indeed.



## History of The Garden Project

### The Seedbed:

#### The Jail Horticulture Program

The inspiration for The Garden Project dates to the early '80s. It was then that Catherine Sneed, a county inmate counselor working under Sheriff Michael Hennessey, took the initiative to convert 12 junk- and weed-glutted acres behind the San Francisco County Jail into a flourishing, organic garden of herbs, flowers and produce and convert inmates into functional—and often accomplished—gardeners. This became known as the Jail Horticulture Program, and here Sneed saw some of the toughest offenders start to care about lives other than their own, even if it was the life of a fledgling strawberry or baby lettuce. "This is my responsibility," one inmate said. "I never been there for my kids... (but) these are my babies right now. They live or die because of me."

Along with organic gardening, the program teaches important lessons on work, life and self-respect. It also fosters responsibility to the community. All the produce from the program goes to shelters, soup kitchens, AIDS organizations and schools. "You should see the riots we started last Halloween, going to schools," says Sneed. "Kids went wild. Guys who used to sell dope in the neighborhood are now willing to work extra hours to make sure everyone in the class gets a pumpkin. Kids don't miss that point—The Big Dealer is now somebody who grows pumpkins and plants trees."

Sneed tries to give everyone who wants to participate a chance in the jail garden, though that is difficult. There are always far more interested candidates than there is space, and it is important to let inmates (students as they are called in the program) stay in the garden long enough to begin changing destructive ways of thinking and behaving. A former student said, "Once I got to the garden, I couldn't wait for tomorrow to get back out

there. Most people don't look forward to another day in jail, you know. But ... the fresh air, sunshine, the smells. First time I put something in the ground and it came up, it blew me away."

## Germination:

### Genesis of The Garden Project

"I realized that to nurture people while they're here, to start teaching them a new way of behaving and thinking, and then to send them back to their old world was like another sentence," says Sneed. In some cases, a death sentence. A few even asked to remain incarcerated just so they could stay in the garden.

Sheriff Hennessey was well aware of the risks, not only to the community, but to the former inmates, once released. "Three real threats that can get them back into trouble: friends, drugs and cops. Their old buddies will encourage them back into the old life. Drugs are obviously a temptation and a problem. And police, once they know you're out on probation, can haul you in for any suspicion. Creating a community garden like The Garden Project means creating a drug-free, hassle-free zone. A safe place for them to go."

This was the impetus for The Garden Project—to create an environment on the outside, where former offenders, many of whom had been in the Jail Horticulture Program, would have a place to continue to learn, to practice discipline and the work ethic, to earn enough of a salary that they didn't have to survive by dealing or hustling, to get on the road to total personal and economic independence, and to feel safe.

The project was officially launched in 1991, as Sneed and Hennessey began pitching the idea to any group or business they thought might be interested in the core issues: gardening, job training and employment, food, crime prevention, and beautification. Elliot Hoffman, owner of San Francisco's Just Desserts Bakery, was part of a group that had toured the Jail Horticultural Program. The land behind his bakery, an abandoned and depressed lot leased from a railroad corporation, became the site for The Garden Project. It is now an acre-sized oasis of herbs, flowers and some of the most exotic organic produce available. Students include Jail Horticulture Program graduates, men and women from drug rehabilitation programs, welfare mothers, and, when space permits, interested friends and relatives.

The Garden Project exists today as a testament of "true grit"—individuals persevering tenaciously like those in Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath*, characters who first inspired Sneed's vision.

Finding the necessary resources from public and private sources has not ceased to be a challenge: petitioning for funds, as well as in-kind services such as tools and seeds. The Garden Project generates some income by selling produce at the San Francisco Farmer's Market and to some of the finest restaurants in the nation, like Berkeley's Chez Panisse, Rubicom's, Lulu's and The Fog City Diner. Despite the fact that the Project sells everything it grows, garden space is limited, so the harvests cover only a portion of expenses. And Sneed is adamant that more than 90% of the money that comes in goes to pay the workers. "That's the point," she says. "You can't try to teach people the value of honest work—both for themselves and their community—if you don't pay them honestly."

As for the future? The Garden Project is looking to expand to other gardens across the city and across the country. Five thousand people have come through the Jail Horticulture Program; 600 people through The Garden Project. And there's always a waiting list.

If you are concerned about crime, and you believe your community has the law enforcement, civic and business leadership to support a creative, positive crime prevention program, consider starting a Garden Project in your area. This manual, based on the experience of The Garden Project of San Francisco, can help you get started.



## Creating Your Garden Project

### *Field of Dreams: The Model*

The stated goals of The Garden Project are:

- To bring people and the environment together to strengthen them both
- To empower disenfranchised people to become job-ready
- To beautify low-income areas of the city

According to organizers, participants, supporters and even observers of the San Francisco Garden Project, these objectives—and many others that were not anticipated—have been met. Examples of demonstrable progress in the areas of crime prevention, environmental awareness/beautification, economic stimulation, and personal development are cited below.

The Project has accomplished all this by forming key partnerships with various constituents, including law enforcement agencies, community groups, businesses, the media, and educational institutions.

## THE ROOT SYSTEM:

### *Forming Networks & Partnerships*

The success of this program depends on the strength of the coalition you build. Remember to make participation simple and non-threatening. While it would be ideal for every partner to contribute money, donations of in-kind services or goods (i.e. office space, supplies, gardening tools, seeds, lunches for the workers, volunteers, and transportation) also provide critical support and encourage further involvement.

- Because everyone is interested in creating a safer, healthier community, virtually any and all groups or businesses in your area could have a legitimate stake in this project. Be sure to emphasize the benefits of the program that would most appeal to each group (e.g., when speaking to the PTA, talk about the importance of landscaping and beautifying the school yards, teaching children about the environment and better nutrition, and providing solid and positive role models.)
- Keep track of—and make public—information about all partnerships. Use the "peer mentality" to your advantage; organizations often feel more comfortable supporting a new or different program when they know similar organizations are doing so.
- Ask each group you approach to suggest others that might be interested; then follow up.
- Not every meeting has to take the form of a formal convocation or full-blown speech. Arrange private

meetings with key decision-makers, or offer a "field trip" to the proposed (or current) garden site (or to similar projects, if such exist in your region).

## PROSPECTIVE PARTNERS

### Partnering with Law Enforcement

*"Generally, law enforcement plays an authoritarian role. This gives us a chance to show another side to the community and to form new and non-traditional alliances with case workers, restaurants, community gardening groups and the Chamber of Commerce. It's an unusual opportunity to interact with law-abiding citizens and to work together for a greater good."*

—Sheriff Michael Hennessey

The Garden Project is, foremost, a crime prevention program. It was established to reduce the alarming rate of recidivism by providing a law-abiding lifestyle alternative.

### Start-up Suggestions:

- Begin by contacting the local law enforcement officials in your area. These include the sheriff of your city, town or county and the police chief. Don't forget to include the community policing department.
- Also involve wardens or department heads at the local correctional facilities.
- Before approaching these groups, you might want to conduct some research at the library or call and speak with the reporter who covers the "police and crime" beat on your local newspaper to get a feel for the recidivism situation in your area. This information can provide a platform for your discussion.



### Crime Prevention Benefits:

- Helps reduce recidivism by providing employment, structure and a positive alternative to destructive and illegal patterns.
- Provides positive role models for the community, including at-risk children, by placing former offenders in productive, public employment positions.
- Helps reduce homelessness by providing a living wage to the formerly indigent.

### Partnering with the Community

*"We ain't used to creatin' nothin'. We're used to tearin' things up. Graffiti, breakin' bottles, you know. Now we make everywhere we been beautiful."*

—George, Garden Project participant

This is truly a community project. It can benefit every citizen in some way, and the more participants you can recruit, the more successful your project will be.

### Start-up Suggestions:

- Contact your local civic league. Most are intensely concerned about crime prevention and may already sponsor programs like "Neighborhood Crime Watch." A Garden Project would be an ideal civic league adoptee and a complementary adjunct to programs already in place.
- Contact local and regional gardening and horticultural groups in your area. Start by looking for a local chapter of the Garden Club, then ask a club representative for the names of other gardening groups.
- If there is a botanical garden in your community, approach officials there. They often sponsor classes and clubs that would be a good source for suggestions, supporters and volunteers.
- Most towns have a clearinghouse that provides information on the many volunteer opportunities available in your area. It will generally be listed in the beginning of your phone book, along with other public access services. Call and ask about organizations dedicated to crime prevention or environmentalism/ beautification and contact them.

### Civic/Community Benefits: Environmental

- Beautifies city through planting, landscaping and maintenance efforts concentrated on low-income, depressed areas.
- Teaches environmental appreciation and preservation to participants, volunteers, and students at the Alliance for Green Schools.
- Creates forum for local environmental, beautification and conservation groups to share ideas and resources as they work cooperatively on Garden Project issues.





- Practices and teaches French Intensive Biodynamic gardening, which is considered the most resource-efficient and productive use of land possible. It requires one-quarter of the space of traditional row gardening and produces two to six times the yield.

### **Civic/Community Benefits: Social**

- Forges coalitions and encourages networking among government, industry, business and civic concerns by providing a single, unifying focus.
- Encourages communication and positive interaction between social groups that traditionally have remained separate. For instance, it provides an opportunity for former offenders to work side-by-side with law-abiding citizens on gardening projects and for public officials to work with private industry in new ways.
- Provides a positive, high-profile example of community involvement through media attention, public presence on city streets and at public schools.
- Makes community safer by giving former inmates an alternative to repeating criminal behavior.

### **Partnering with Business**

*"I used to use food stamps but I don't now. This program is a stepping stone. It's taught me that I'm worth employing, that I'm worth more than a welfare check. Some day I'll learn I'm worth more than \$5.50 an hour, and I'll move on. But...the garden will go with me."*

—Lovelie, Garden Project participant

*"I was their first customer, 3-4 years ago... I believed in Catherine and what she was trying to do, and I feel strongly that you contribute to your community. (And so) I might have given them a little business anyway, just to help out. But I'm fanatical about what I*

*purchase, and I certainly wouldn't buy in the volume I do now (I'm their biggest customer) if the produce wasn't fresh, tasty and beautiful to look at—top-quality."*

—Alice Waters, Owner/Chef, Chez Panisse

Businesses that have supported The Garden Project by buying produce, donating goods or services, hiring workers or hosting fundraisers, are all learning that good citizenship is good business. As Reed Heron, chef at LuLu's restaurant in San Francisco, put it, "The brilliance of the program is that it serves us and the community so beautifully. We get a product superior to what we could get elsewhere, and we know we're helping out. Why wouldn't you do it?"

### **Start-up Suggestions:**

- Contact local business organizations such as the local chapters of the Chamber of Commerce, the Lion's Club, the Rotary Clubs of America, and the Jaycee's. These groups are always interested in soliciting speakers for their meetings, and they are dedicated to community improvement and economic stimulation, which are consistent with The Garden Project's purposes.
- Contact the public relations department of the major industries or businesses in your area. Explain The Garden Project, and ask about the standard procedure for petitioning for financial and/or other forms of support; then follow-up.
- Contact national companies that have a natural connection to The Garden Project such as Smith & Hawken (gardening tools) or the W. Atlee Burpee Seed Company. Explain the Garden Project, and determine if there is a company policy or precedent for providing support to community projects. (They may direct you to their local retailers. Be sure to ask for a contact name and suggestions on how best to solicit participation or contributions.)



- Don't forget to canvass even small local businesses—restaurants, grocery stores, nurseries and other garden supply stores, hardware stores, farmer's markets, etc. They can all contribute or participate in some way, and their ideas and enthusiasm could prove invaluable.

### Business Benefits:

- Provides source for loyal, well-trained workers.
- Provides source of superior product (produce).
- Builds employee morale and customer loyalty; people feel good about working for/ patronizing a business that helps the community.
- Makes community a safer place to do business.
- Nets positive media attention.
- Signals positive corporate citizenship.
- Encourages valuable networking/co-op opportunities.

*"You have to be creative, but then, most entrepreneurs love a challenge. We got involved from the very beginning and pulled together the first group of supporters, including people like activist and professor Angela Davis and Ben Cohen of Ben & Jerry's, to help the Project build the business enterprise aspect. One unexpected consequence was that we hired a student from the program—a former "tagger" (graffiti vandal)—as an artist with our firm. His work is now (legitimately!) all over some of the biggest companies in town."*

—Meredith and Dan Beam, Beam, Inc.

### Economic Stimulation Benefits

- Provides job training and employment by teaching skills and offering salaried jobs.
- Encourages independence from public assistance by providing employment and teaching self-reliance.
- Creates jobs, opportunities and new markets by providing employment and selling produce and preparing Garden Project graduates for future employment.
- Offsets the financial costs of incarceration, estimated at \$25,000 - \$30,000 per year, per person in jail, \$80,000 - \$90,000 per year, per person in prison.

### Partnering with Education

*"I want to be here. I weed, I meditate. I'm going back to school to get my GED. I got off the (welfare) rolls. I'm learning the value of things; that's the biggest change in me. I had planted myself in the wrong environment; (so) I had to uproot myself to start growing the right way; (I had to) weed out what was choking me."*

—Camille, Garden Project participant

Teaching and learning are the very essence of The Garden Project. Partnering with universities, high schools and elementary schools can provide assistance



with: helping train and educate designated Garden Project teachers/instructors; supplying a source of volunteers, supporters and advisors; and furnishing sites for specific beautification/landscaping projects.

### Start-up Suggestions:

- Contact the top administrator (principal or president) of all the schools in your area. Be sure to include high schools (a good source of interns, according to the San Francisco Garden Project) as well as elementary schools, community colleges and universities. Explain The Garden Project and how the school might contribute to it and benefit from it. Start a dialogue with them; solicit suggestions and ideas.
- Contact the president of the local PTA. Offer to speak about The Garden Project at one of their meetings.
- Find out if the university in your area has an Extension Service. If so, contact it. Such a service is dedicated to helping the public with environmental/organic and agricultural concerns, and it may be a helpful resource.
- Don't forget about continuing education programs, some of which may not be affiliated with a school or university.

### Personal Growth/Education Benefits

- Teaches general work skills and discipline using instruction and application.
- Offers practical experience by providing hands-on learning opportunities.
- Offers supportive environment for behavior change by providing counseling, supervision and peer reinforcement.
- Underscores the value of environmental issues by providing participants with what is often a first—and generally positive—experience with gardening and the natural world.

- Raises awareness of vocational opportunities for children and adults by modeling positive forms of employment in public arenas, such as city schools and thoroughfares.
- Encourages participants to think philosophically by structuring the gardening lessons to relate to their lives (e.g., instructors continually use the metaphor that, just as organic, chemical-free produce looks, tastes and smells better—and nets a higher value on the open market—so our lives are healthier and more valuable when we are chemical-free).

### Partnering with the Media

*"Quite honestly, I haven't courted the media—they have come to me."*

—Catherine Sneed, The Garden Project Co-founder

... and indeed they have—from The New York Times, Ms., Mirabella, Family Circle, San Francisco Chronicle, Orion Summer to national TV appearances on CBS Sunday Morning and McNeil-Lehrer. Even as it approaches its fifth year in the San Francisco area, local media continue to run regular news and feature articles about the Project. It has ripe publicity potential because it is unusual, new and diverse and has a strong human interest component.

### Start-up Suggestions:

- Target the many "publics" with whom you'll want to communicate. Specifically, you will want to make sure that the local judicial/law enforcement community and your key constituents are initially informed about the Project's objectives and then consistently and regularly informed of its progress and needs. If you have a media and public relations department at your disposal, be sure to use its services.



- Assign one person in your department to speak at civic groups and other community convocations. Make sure he/she is thoroughly briefed about the program's goals and operations.
- Have orientation materials, including this booklet, to distribute/mail to all interested parties. (Once you get a program established, photographs of the participants, compiled in booklet form along with quotations, can be an inexpensive but powerful piece of collateral to use with the media and/or in fundraising.)
- Begin locally, with civic groups and department meetings. Call the club president or the company manager to schedule a time and place for your talk. Ask that it be well-publicized or communicated through flyers, ads, in-house organs, community newsletters, etc.
- Hold a press conference for the kick-off of the Project. Include a strong visual element to encourage coverage, such as holding the conference at the garden site.
- As your program evolves, photograph the progress. These photos will be helpful to the media, and can be the basis for a speaker's bureau slide show.
- Hold media "updates" in the garden. Suggest trips to the garden for all potential supporters and/or local dignitaries. Have program participants conduct the tours of the garden. Alert the media to these events.
- Once the Project is up and running, hold fundraising events right in the garden. Serve the garden's produce, prepared by well-known local chefs.
- If you are one of the first in your area or region to start a Garden Project, you have a built-in advantage. The media considers any distinction such as "first" or "only" to be inherently newsworthy. Emphasize these aspects in communicating with them.
- Be proactive! Develop a relationship with reporters whose "beats" include law enforcement/crime and gardening/beautification, as these areas would be the most ripe for continuing coverage. Keep reporters notified of all developments and progress. Supply them with press releases and materials, but also suggest angles they may want to pursue—the press is always likelier to print something their own reporters have written.
- Solicit someone in the media or public relations field to sit on your advisory board.
- In pitching stories to the media, frame all your comments in terms of their needs; study and indicate that you know the style of their publication and the interests of their reader/viewership, and suggest stories accordingly. Some will want to pursue the human interest aspects, others the business component or the law enforcement angle.

- Maintain an updated database of all media contacts, and be sure to keep all print and video clips. Copy and distribute these as part of your ongoing community and media relations efforts; it underscores your credibility and serves as a platform to build on your success.
- Schedule your kick-off and any ongoing media relations events for days and times when they are least likely to compete with "hot" news.
- If staff and budget allow, try to designate one person as the primary media contact; this helps you keep your messages and your efforts consistent and clear.
- Always think visually. Experiment with different backgrounds and settings for your media relations events—both television and print reporters appreciate having a strong visual to accompany the story, and it increases your chances of getting good coverage.

#### **Media and Public Relations Benefits:**

- Offers the least expensive, most credible way to "advertise" your program.
- Helps benchmark progress, solicit funds and volunteers, showcase personalities, and thank sponsors and supporters.
- Aids fundraising efforts by lending credence and legitimacy to your efforts.

#### **Partnering with Local Government**

*"We're all in this together. This project may have started at the law enforcement level, but there isn't a part of the community that doesn't benefit. We need to get out of the mindset that jail is some remote island,*



*unrelated to the lives of the rest of us, and that we have no collective interest in dealing with former offenders. Because 90% of all inmates will eventually be released. So every day we face a choice: community problem or community solution."*

**—Sheriff Michael Hennessey**

Government assistance launched and sustains The Garden Project, primarily through the staff support of the sheriff's office. The Tree Program operates exclusively through a public works project funded through a sales tax initiative, and a community block grant from the San Francisco Mayor's office recently funded stipends and supplies for The Garden Project students.

The Food Stamp Employment and Training Program seeks to assist food stamp recipients achieve greater self-sufficiency by gaining the skills, training, or experience that will increase their ability to obtain regular employment. State agencies may choose to operate one or more of a variety of components, including job search, job search training, workfare, classroom training for occupational or basic skills, or a program designed to improve employability through actual work experience or training. The components may vary within a State. By serving food stamp participants and giving them new job skills and work experience, the Garden Project offers a model for other States and communities to consider as they design their own employment and training programs.

#### **Start-up Suggestions:**

- Call the State agency that administers the Food Stamp Program to discuss becoming part of the State's Food Stamp Program Employment and Training Program.
- Peer contact is the most direct and effective approach. For instance, if you were successful in gaining the support of the sheriff or someone else at the top level of law enforcement, establish this person as the key sponsor and have him or her approach other directors and department heads, such as the Director of Public Works, the Director of Public Safety and the Mayor.
- Call your city council and ask to get on the agenda for an upcoming meeting to explain The Garden Project. (One informal way to establish a relationship with the council is to attend any "open door days" or public meetings and forums sponsored by them. Use this as an opportunity to meet members and field your ideas.)
- Specifically identify those chairpersons whose committees have some logical connection to The Garden Project (e.g., safety, crime, beautification), and keep them aware of your activities and progress.

### Benefits of Government Support

- Provides a source of funding (grants) that is more reliable and consistent than most others, allowing for planning and expansion.
- Can provide support in the form of staff. (The Garden Project of San Francisco exists exclusively because the sheriff's office allocated one full-time staff member to its development).
- Creates crucial relationships among city leaders that will be critical to the successful operation of the Project and in maintaining favorable public opinion.

### Partnering with Foundations & Funding Organizations

*"We've got the heart and the hands; now we're working on the head. We need a solid administrative infrastructure for our long-term viability and to create a structure for day-to-day 'minding of the store.' Essentially, we're trying to create an institution without 'institutionalizing' the soul of the program."*

—Michele Lynn,  
The Garden Project Development Director

*"I firmly believe that programs like this reduce recidivism; (and) foundations have a particularly strong role to play. We must be willing to take a risk for any group that shows a real commitment. (Programs like this) can't count on grant and foundation money alone—they must explore a number of sources. And as a community, it is our responsibility to respond to that good-faith effort."*

—Bill Sommerville, Executive Director,  
Philanthropic Ventures Foundation

There are many avenues you can pursue in raising funds for your Garden Project. A good place to start is with foundations. Some of these are public, some are private, some local, some national, but all are dedicated to community improvement, and most are favorably disposed to new ideas.

Another place to look for funding is the State agency that administers the Food Stamp Program's Employment and Training Program. The federal government provides each State with 100% federally-funded grants to provide employment and training services to program participants. Beyond the 100% grants, the federal government will reimburse States for half of what they spend to administer the Employment and Training Program and reimburse participants for certain expenses. States may elect to provide employment and training program services themselves or contract out with service providers. Since your Garden Project would potentially provide job training and employment opportu-



nities for food stamp participants, your Garden Project could potentially be a component of the State's employment and training program.

### Start-up Suggestions:

- Call the local or regional foundation in your area, or contact The Foundation Center, an independent, non-profit organization that can provide information (including directories) on all foundations in the United States. They can be reached at: The Foundation Center, 1001 Connecticut Avenue, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036. 202-331-1400.
- Check to see if your area hosts any philanthropic organization that exists expressly to assist non-profit organizations, like the Tides Foundation of San Francisco. If so, this is a great place to start. For a fee, (generally a percentage of your budget), these organizations can:
  - Administer the program and serve as a fiscal agent
  - Help you gain 5013C status, enabling tax-free contributions
  - Pay bills
  - Audit accounts
  - Assist with legal compliance
  - Help establish a legal board of directors
- Or seek out local and national foundations. They will provide guidance for free and may be able to direct you to other places for similar services.
- Establish an advisory board of opinion and business leaders. This board, comprised of about 15 people, would meet monthly. Members' responsibilities, in addition to providing guidance and ideas, should include introducing the Project to their constituents/members/associates.
- Ultimately, you will want to establish a legal board of directors.

- If possible, allocate funding for one full-time development director right from the beginning. This is a critical role, and the Project Director generally cannot wear both hats.

### Benefits to Working with Foundations

- Offers a source of "seed" or start-up money.
- Provides information and non-monetary assistance, including assistance in applying for and writing grants.
- Helps create a basis for your strategic plan. (Grant application process requires a proposal outlining how your program will operate, and how and when it is expected to become financially independent.)

## HARVESTING:

### Program Structure & Operations

The following are suggested guidelines based on the experience of San Francisco's Garden Project. Your structure will obviously be shaped by funding, resources and management style, among other variables.

### Fundraising

The experience of The Garden Project has shown that there are certain challenges particular to raising funds for a precedent-setting program: potential backers may be more comfortable funding a program that has an established track record, or that can be more easily and objectively evaluated. Personal involvement can help overcome these apprehensions, and should be a critical part of your fundraising efforts.

The Garden Project backers reported that they were influenced by:

- The program's vision
- The dedication of The Garden Project founders and staff
- The sincerity and enthusiasm of the participants
- The physical transformation of the sites
- The quality of the program and the produce

### Suggested ways to communicate these strengths:

- Invite potential backers to view the project or proposed site and meet staff and participants.
- Form an Advisory Board, representing a cross-section of the community.
- Select Advisory Board members who are opinion leaders. Solicit their assistance in approaching their peers and associates.

### Budgeting

- The bulk of the funding you raise should be allocated for payroll. Administrative expenses are a pressing reality, too, but often these resources (e.g., office space, equipment, even clerical assistance) can be donated or handled by volunteers.
- Other line items will include everything from the predictable to the unexpected. Brainstorm every conceivable expense, then divide the list according to those things that could be donated (e.g., shears, trowels and hoses) versus those that must be paid for in cash (e.g., gasoline, water, electricity).
- Remember that funding can come from a number of sources, both public and private. Once you establish a market for your produce, you will be able to rely on a certain amount for each harvest and can include this income in your budget.

### Participants

*"Turning people away is the hardest thing I do; it's the worst part of my job. If I had the resources, it would never happen. That's the dream."*

—Catherine Sneed, The Garden Project Co-founder

- Funding dictates garden space and payroll; obviously the more of it you have, the more people you can include. The limited space and the labor-intensive nature of French Intensive Biodynamic gardening make an equation of about 20 participants per half-acre ideal, according to The Garden Project program directors and participants. Providing adequate supervision and guidance is also critical to the program: a ratio of approximately 10 to one, participants to staff, is considered sound.
- Participants should be selected based on their enthusiasm. Sneed maintains that little else matters—the unlikeliest candidates going in can become some of the most accomplished gardeners and law-abiding



citizens. (The program cites a member of the Tree Corps who was a repeat offender, in and out of prison throughout his life. He is now a supervisor, has been a model employee for many years and is a proud and responsible guardian, teaching his grandson the Latin names of all the trees he plants and subsidizing his private Catholic school education.) Sneed maintains you can't predict which ones will work out, but that the process is self-pruning: "the problem cases take care of themselves."

### **Job Requirements: Participants**

Participants are required to learn—and perform—all the functions of employment, including:

- Being on time, leaving on time, working agreed-upon hours.
- Keeping track of hours worked; checking to insure proper payment.
- Accomplishing the day's task, as outlined by the supervisor.
- Working cooperatively.
- Maintaining a positive attitude; being respectful of themselves and others.

In addition, The Garden Project participants are required to comply with the dictates of their "Personal Progress Agreement."

### **Staff**

- Supervisory and counseling staff can come from just about anywhere; those with law enforcement and/or drug-alcohol counseling may be particularly well-suited.
- If funding permits, allocate at least one staff person exclusively for fundraising and development efforts. This is a critical, full-time job and one that should be separate from day-to-day program operations.

### **Job Requirements: Staff**

The Garden Project staff act as on-site (garden, schools, Tree Corps sites, Farmer's Market) supervisors and managers. In addition, they:

- Act as advocates for participants.
- Negotiate sale and selection of produce with local restaurants and retailers.
- Arrange transportation of people and product as necessary.
- Supervise compliance with all aspects of the "Personal Progress Agreement."
- Counsel participants; help resolve disputes and problems.
- Teach and train participants regarding gardening techniques and daily assignments.

- Maintain communication with sheriff's office parole officers, and others within the system as needed.

### **Scheduling**

- In general, a five-day, 40-hour work week is a good baseline for job training, as it reflects the normal work week. Obviously, if funding permits, additional days and hours are preferable, to help participants increase their income.

### **Training**

- Gardening training is conducted by The Garden Project staff, several of whom have advanced degrees in horticulture. The Jail Horticulture Program also retains a consultant farmer.
- Don't forget to make the most of your volunteer resources! Coalitions and partnerships you build with the League of Urban Gardeners, the Garden Club and similar volunteer groups in your area can be an invaluable source of experienced trainers and teachers.

### **Garden Design/Layout/Yield**

*"I get to looking at all these colors and shapes, and I see how they blend. We need these differences—that's what I'm learning. Difference can be peaceful."*

—Tim, Garden Project participant

- What you grow will be dictated strongly by geography. Not everyone has the advantage of a California climate, but even those areas with the harshest winters and the shortest growing season can produce something year-round (e.g., using hothouses, raising hearty root vegetables that are impervious to cold, etc.). To design the optimal crop schedule, consult with professional farmers/horticulturists in your area, or call the Extension Service at the local university.
- Plant with an eye for what's popular and potentially profitable. Talk with chefs and restaurateurs about produce they'd prefer and about their purchasing requirements.
- Respect the aesthetics! Sprinkle your garden with wildflowers and herbs to maintain a pleasing blend of colors, smells, textures. Rotate crops to keep soil fertile. Plant with enough diversity to keep participants interested and to offer new learning opportunities.

### **Duration**

*"Just like parents, we have to walk a fine line between providing nurturing and unconditional support, and moving students to the next challenge. They can't stay here forever (and some want to—this is the only safe place they've ever been). At the same time, you can't*

*push them from the nest too soon and have them court failure. Even though this is a job, it's also a program—it has a purpose different from simply producing a product, making a profit."*

—Kit Henshaw, Garden Project manager

- After a year in the garden, most participants are qualified for greater responsibilities in a program like the Tree Corps or Alliance for Green Schools, or to consider other employment opportunities.
- The Garden Project was designed to be a one-year program and the Tree Corps a two-year program, though obviously some participants stay longer; others move on sooner.

## BALES, BUSHELS, BASKETS:

### Tracking & Evaluation

*"If you save even a half a dozen lives, it's worth it. And everyone who goes through this program stands a much better chance of breaking the cycle than they would without it."*

—Sharon Levinson,  
Food and Consumer Service, USDA

Time, funding and staff constraints, complicated by the transience and homelessness of this population, have prohibited The Garden Project from compiling hard data on recidivism rates. Categorically, all those involved with the Project believe it has significantly stemmed the tide for the more than 600 people who have participated, though that cannot be documented.

Sneed estimates that 99% of those who come to the program receive food stamps; most leave having become partly or wholly independent.

Obviously, this data is useful in substantiating progress, and will enhance legitimacy and help attract funding. Compiling such a database takes time and money. If possible, establish a staff member or volunteer to track and evaluate the following data:

- Number of participants
- Average length of participation
- Recidivism rates
- Permanent employment statistics
- Number of those entering who receive public assistance
- Number of those receiving public assistance upon leaving program, or shortly thereafter

*"I'm only a hot second from picking up a cold beer and heading for the street corner. But I don't want that life anymore. I have a 14-year-old son, and my worker recently told me that I've been overpaying on my child support and I thought 'that's cool.' I volunteer at a shelter as a cook when I'm not here; work from sunup to sundown. It's hard sometimes, but it's a lot easier than being a knucklehead."*

—Tim, Garden Project participant

The Garden Project of San Francisco does have certain qualitative measurements built into the system. The primary method of evaluating progress is through a curriculum that:

- Teaches life skills, including: "how to hold a job," "how to interact responsibly and respectfully with others," and "how to remain substance-free."
- Reinforces personal responsibility and encourages improvement by requiring that participants sign a "Personal Progress Agreement." This agreement requires enrollment in GED classes or college, visits to parole and/or probation officer, making child-support payments and counseling, if needed, for substance abuse or other problems. This is supervised through weekly case-worker meetings.





## **BUMPER CROP:**

### ***Offshoots of The Garden Project***

The Garden Project of San Francisco has expanded beyond the initial garden. Two projects are more recent outgrowths, offering additional employment opportunities at higher wages. The three key components of the program are:

The Carroll Street Market Garden (a.k.a. The Garden Project) is the mainstay of the program. It is a one-acre lot, which grows produce ranging from raddichio, to radishes, chives and arugula to butter lettuce—whatever is in season, popular or specially requested by restaurants. Produce from this garden is sold to key area restaurants and at the San Francisco Farmer's Market. The number of student/participants varies according to funding, but generally involves 25-40 regulars. Most work a 32-hour week in the garden and earn \$5.60 per hour.

The Tree Corps is essentially the "graduate" Garden Project program. It provides full-time employment planting and maintaining trees throughout the city. The program plants about 800 trees per year and waters and maintains close to 1,000. It generally employs about 10 workers. The Tree Corps operates through a contractual arrangement with San Francisco's Department of Public Works. According to program directors Elliott Donnelley and Jerous Sneed, "It's a successful public-

private partnership: we do good work, and we've proved we can do it cost-effectively." The contract amount has multiplied tenfold in four years. Tree Corps participants earn \$8.00 per hour.

The Alliance for Green Schools (a.k.a. The School Corps) landscapes, plants gardens and beautifies school yards, located in low-income neighborhoods, then teaches the students how to plant and maintain the gardens. "We also use the opportunity to teach participants about eating, nutrition and organic food," says Robert, a former Jail Horticulture Program student who turned down two other full-time jobs to stay with the program. "It's important for neighborhood kids to have good role models, to see adults doing constructive work," he says. The gardens include flowers, herbs, perennials and vegetables, with an emphasis on plantings that can be used in environmental education. When funding is strong, a crew of about 10 serves more than seven community schools. School Corps participants earn \$8.00 per hour.

### **FOR MORE INFORMATION,**

#### **Contact:**

**Beverly Sneed Echols**

*The Garden Project of San Francisco*

*Pier 28*

*San Francisco, California 94105*

*Phone: (415) 243-8045*

*Fax: (415) 243-8221*

## APPENDIX

The Garden Project is a private/public partnership of the San Francisco County Sheriff's Office and the San Francisco community to help disadvantaged persons become productive, self-sufficient citizens. This project offers former prisoners, participants in drug and alcohol rehabilitation programs, and welfare mothers - many of whom receive food stamps - the opportunity to learn important job skills as they transform abandoned lots into vegetable gardens. The garden produce is sold to local restaurants and bakeries, with the proceeds paying the salaries of the garden employees. It combines crime prevention, job training, and employment for people in need.

With its emphasis on providing job training and employment for people in need, the potential exists to link innovations like The Garden Project to the Food Stamp Program's Employment and Training (E&T) Program. E&T seeks to assist food stamp recipients achieve greater self-sufficiency by gaining the skills, training, or experience that will increase their ability to obtain regular employment. By serving food stamp participants and giving them new job skills and work experience, The Garden Project offers a model for other States and communities as they design their own employment and training programs.

Because of the potential link between The Garden Project's employment and training opportunities and the Food Stamp Program's employment and training mission as well as its focus on food production, the Food and Consumer Service funded a small-scale descriptive evaluation. The evaluation's objectives were to: 1) develop a guidebook for other communities interested in implementing similar projects; and 2) assess The Garden Project in terms of the number of people served, the number of food stamp participants served, their characteristics, and outcomes following participation in the project. This appendix presents information on the second objective.

The evaluation consisted of a week-long site visit to The Garden Project where the evaluation team conducted in-depth interviews with staff and participants and observed the operation of The Garden Project. The evaluation team of three people interviewed eight staff and six participants over a six-day period; they also spent six days observing the operation of The Garden Project. The evaluation had also planned to review The Garden Project records to establish a profile of The Garden Project participants.

Unfortunately, since the Garden Project has lacked the resources necessary to track and maintain information on its participants and their outcomes, information on the characteristics and outcomes of participants is unavailable. The Garden Project staff has limited information about its participants and most information on participant outcomes is anecdotal. Here are our findings:

### **Participant Numbers and Characteristics**

Approximately 600 participants have graduated from The Garden Project from 1990 to 1995. Most participants learned about The Garden Project by participating in the Jail Horticulture Program, which has seen more than 5,000 participants. When funding permits, The Garden Project allows drug or alcohol rehabilitation program participants, welfare mothers, and the interested friends and relations of participants to participate.

The number of participants working at a given time varies with funding. As many as 125 people have worked at The Garden Project at any one time. The Garden Project staff believe that 40 people working in the garden is average. At the time the evaluation team conducted the interviews, 60 people worked in the Jail Horticultural Program, 20 in The Garden Project, 10 in the Tree Corps, and seven to 19 in the Alliance for Green Schools.

Participants are required to learn - and perform - all functions of employment. The Garden Project's objective is to be able to provide a 40-hour work week. However, the number of hours worked per week depends on the funding available to support the program. At the time of our interviews, funding only supported approximately 32 hours per person. Participants are responsible for keeping track of the hours worked since the participants do not work strictly delineated shifts. While some follow the traditional 9:00 to 5:00 schedule, most have conflicts which preclude this schedule. When schedule conflicts arise, participants negotiate a more flexible schedule with their supervisor.

After a year in The Garden Project, most participants are qualified for greater responsibilities in a program like the Tree Corps or Alliance for Green Schools or to consider other employment opportunities. The average length of participation in The Garden Project is between 12 and 18 months. Some stay as long as two years, but

organizers encourage participants to move on as soon as they are ready to begin applying their skills in the larger workplace.

The Garden Project pays its workers more than the minimum wage. Participants earn \$5.50 per hour when working in the garden. The Tree Corps and Alliance for Green Schools offer additional employment opportunities at higher wages, \$8.00 per hour.

Almost all - 99% - Garden Project participants receive food stamps and/or other forms of public assistance upon entering the program. By the time participants leave The Garden Project, while a large percentage are less dependent on food stamps or public assistance, most do not earn enough income to be entirely self-sufficient. All the participants interviewed discussed their desire to end their reliance on public assistance and some have succeeded in reaching their goal. Of the six in-depth interviews conducted, four had become fully independent from public assistance as a result of their participation in The Garden Project. Several also reported they had returned to school - generally community colleges - to pursue degrees in horticulture.

Most participants are between 18-35 years old, unemployed upon entering the program, and lack a high school diploma. Predominately more males than females participate. African-Americans are the primary racial group participating in The Garden Project, followed by Hispanics, then whites.

### **The Garden Project Operations**

Funding dictates the number of participants, not only by providing more full-time positions, but by creating opportunities to purchase more land. The current garden is roughly an acre. The Garden Project's board of directors is exploring the purchase of another 10-acre site somewhere in the San Francisco area. The Jail Horticultural Program garden is currently about 15 acres.

The nature of French Intensive Biodynamic gardening translates to greater yields per acre than traditional farming methods, creating more potential for profit. Also, the more exotic, organic "specialty" produce grown in these environs and the high-quality standards of The Garden Project allow them to meet the market value for these wares, change crops according to what is in demand, and consistently sell more than The Garden Project can produce. Currently, The Garden Project does not maintain figures on how much the garden produces.

The Garden Project is a business. As with any business whose profits support it, The Garden Project sets its prices based on market values and changes its prices based on the demand for a particular type of produce.

The vast majority of produce is sold to area restaurants. Restaurants inform, or essentially order from, The Garden Project managers the produce and amount they wish to purchase. Produce not sold to restaurants is sold at the San Francisco Farmer's Market.

### **Conclusion**

Time, funding, and staffing constraints, complicated by the transience and homelessness of this population, have prevented The Garden Project from compiling data on participant characteristics, outcomes, and recidivism rates. Categorically, all those involved with the program believe it has significantly stemmed the tide for the approximately 600 people who have participated, though that cannot be documented.

Data on participant characteristics and outcomes is useful in substantiating progress and success. It also enhances legitimacy and attracts funding. Communities interested in implementing a program similar to The Garden Project should seriously consider time, funds, and staff to collect this data.